

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2003

Access to Innovative Clinical Laboratory Tests

Dear Colleague:

We have recently introduced **H.R. 569, the Medicare Patient Access to Preventive and Diagnostic Tests Act**, to improve access to important innovative clinical laboratory tests for seniors in the Medicare program.

This bill incorporates many of the recommendations made in a recent report by the Institute of Medicine. They concluded that in the face of rapid technological and health care market changes, "current Medicare payment policy for outpatient clinical laboratory services seems not only outdated, but also irrational." Medicare's complex, cumbersome coding and payment procedures simply cannot keep up with the rapid pace of science and medical innovation. Nowhere is this problem more pressing than in the area of diagnostic testing, which is rapidly advancing into new frontiers like genetics and home-based testing.


The federal government should be a partner in providing access to new technologies. Innovative diagnostic tests help save lives and improve quality of life through earlier disease detection. In addition, advances in technology have increased the accuracy of disease detection and improved patient convenience and compliance by allowing tests to be performed in a variety of settings.


H.R. 569 reforms the coding and payment system for diagnostic laboratory tests in ways that will help Medicare keep pace with innovation. This legislation provides a transparent and public process to ensure that patients, providers, and manufacturers can comment on Medicare's proposed payment for new technologies. Furthermore, it establishes a single national fee schedule for clinical laboratory tests to simplify the payment process.

This bill ensures that we provide a transparent process in Medicare to properly identify and diagnose diseases and illnesses. By reforming the process by which the Medicare system integrates these innovative tests into the health care delivery system now, patients and providers will benefit from the many advances of science and technology.

In the 107th Congress, provisions from this bill were included in H.R. 3391, the Medicare Regulatory and Contracting Reform Act, that passed the House of Representatives. We hope you will join us in supporting this important legislation again this year. To cosponsor this legislation, please contact Vergil Cabasco in Rep. Dunn's office at x57761.

Sincerely,


JENNIFER DUNN
Member of Congress


JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress


JIM RAMSTAD
Member of Congress


PETER DEUTSCH
Member of Congress


MIKE FERGUSON
Member of Congress